

WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF STEPHEN G. ROSENTEL

RAISED BILL NO. 465, AN ACT CONCERNING PURCHASING OF PROPANE

BEFORE THE ON ENERGY AND TECHNOLOGY

COMMITTEE MARCH 18, 2010

My name is Steve Rosentel and I am the President of Leahy's Fuels in Danbury CT serving almost 14,000 propane gas and fuel oil customers.

I would like to clearly explain to you what happens when a propane delivery takes place and why this change represents a huge shift in an attempt to increase competition at the expense of public safety.

I have with me a propane tank valve. This type of valve is installed in stationary propane tanks at customer locations and is different from the type found in 20lb barbecue cylinders in that **it does not contain an automatic shutoff device** known as an OPD.

We rely on our driver to follow the appropriate procedure.

After connecting the nozzle he opens the bleeder valve which should be venting vapor (if not, the tank is empty and the service valve needs to be shutoff and the system checked for leaks before any more gas is delivered into the house).

Assuming there is vapor he opens the nozzle to begin filling the tank. As soon as the liquid level reaches the cone at the bottom of the dip tube, the bleeder port begins venting liquid. The fill nozzle needs to be immediately shut off and the bleeder valve closed.

If the driver is not paying attention and does not shutoff the nozzle quickly a hydrostatic condition where there is no longer any vapor space left in the tank can occur. As the propane warms to ambient temperature an insufficient vapor space can lead to this condition hours, days or even months later if there is no use by the customer. The pressure relief valve is very likely to release liquid propane that will vaporize instantly looking for a source of ignition. Another potential exposure is a

driver forgetting to close the bleeder valve. These types of errors have far greater consequences than if a fuel oil delivery driver overfills an oil tank.

Why do I trust my drivers?

I hire them, do background checks, drug testing, run annual DMV reports and review them carefully. My average propane delivery driver is over 50 years old, has over 20 years driving experience and often was the best oil delivery driver we had who earned the right to move up into a gas route. I suspect most of the over 35 propane companies in this state feel the same way about their drivers. But I can't be sure.

You will be inviting a large numbers of new companies into the propane business who will no doubt seek business by offering lower prices and will cut costs to survive. Will the cost cutting come out of driver training, lower DMV standards, inadequate insurance?

We have literally spent millions of dollars on our propane tanks and have significant equity to lose. Be assured that when the accident happens and our equipment is involved, we will be named in the lawsuit. **Loss control can't be managed with another company filling my tanks and operating my valves.**

Let me assure you I lose accounts and gain accounts from competitors every week.

The overwhelming majority of propane installations are aboveground tanks. These are easily moved in and out of customer locations. Residential underground tank leases will be addressed in proposed legislation already moved out of the General Law committee that will be coming before you soon.

Please ask yourself why would the State Fire Marshall's office have included this specific condition in the State Supplement if there was no public safety issue and should this committee be in the business of overriding and weakening an existing gaseous fuels safety regulation in light of recent events.